NOAA NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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National Weather Service Honors Doris Thompson for Outstanding Service to Volunteer Weather Observer Program

Recognizing more than 36 years of dedication, NOAA's National Weather Service has named Doris Thompson of Stockville, Neb., a 2011 recipient of the agency's John Campanius Holm Award for outstanding service in the Cooperative Weather Observer program. The award is the agency's second-most prestigious, and is presented to deserving cooperative weather observers from around the country.

"Cooperative observers are the bedrock of weather data collection and analysis," said Brian Hirsch, meteorologist-in-charge of NOAA's North Platte National Weather Service office. "Numerous technological breakthroughs have brought great benefits to the nation in terms of better forecasts and warnings. But without the century-long accumulation of accurate weather observations taken by volunteer observers, scientists could not begin to adequately describe the climate of the United States. We cannot thank Doris Thompson enough for so many years of service to America."

Hirsch will present the award during a ceremony at the Stockville Community Hall at 7:30 p.m. on Aug. 20. Observing Program Leader Steve Carmel nominated Ms. Thompson for the award.

The National Weather Service's Cooperative Weather Observer Program is a unique partnership between the National Weather Service and citizen volunteers in every U.S. state and territory. The cooperative observer program has given scientists and researchers continuous weather data since the program's inception in 1890. Today, more than 10,000 volunteer observers participate in the nationwide program to provide daily reports on temperature, precipitation and other weather factors such as snow depth, river levels and soil temperature.

Doris Thompson began her service as a volunteer weather observer by helping take observations at the Cambridge Dam. She took over the Stockville observing station Jan. 1, 1975, at a site started in 1948. Over the years, Thompson has provided more than 13,000 reports on precipitation, snowfall and snow depth to the National Weather Service.

Long and continuous records provide an accurate picture of a locale's normal weather and give climatologists and others a basis for predicting future trends. These data are invaluable for scientists studying floods, droughts and heat and cold waves. At the end of each month, observers submit these records to NOAA, and they become part of the nation's official climate record for temperature and precipitation.

The first extensive network of cooperative stations was established in the 1890s as a result of an 1890 act of Congress that created the U.S. Weather Bureau. Many of the stations have even longer histories. John Campanius Holms' weather records, taken without benefit of instruments in 1644 and 1645, are the earliest known recorded observations in the United States.

Many historic figures have maintained weather records, including Benjamin Franklin, George Washington and Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson maintained an almost unbroken record of weather observations between 1776 and 1816, and Washington took weather observations just a few days before he died. The Jefferson and Holm awards are named for these weather observation pioneers.

NOAA's National Weather Service is the primary source of weather data, forecasts and warnings for the United States and its territories. NOAA's National Weather Service operates the most advanced weather and flood warning and forecast system in the world, helping to protect lives and property and enhance the national economy. Visit us online at weather.gov and on Facebook.

NOAA's mission is to understand and predict changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and to conserve and manage our coastal and marine resources. Join us on Facebook , Twitter and our other social media channels.

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